Please amend the present application as follows:

Claims

The following is a copy of Applicant's claims that identifies language being added with underlining ("___") and language being deleted with strikethrough ("—"), as is applicable:

1. (Currently amended) A method for facilitating image retrieval, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

querying a user as to at least one attribute of an image the user wishes to retrieve by posing a series of explicit questions to the user;

receiving explicit user responses to the posed questions; and

presenting at least one image to the user based upon the user responses.

2. Canceled.

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~2~~ 1, wherein at least one of the successive questions depends upon the user response given to a previous question.

4. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ eliminating potential image matches in response to the received responses.

5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ prompting the user to explicitly identify ~~at least one~~ an image attribute of an image presented to the user so as to increase the proficiency with which images are retrieved for the user.

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising ~~the step of~~ storing ~~an attribute association as~~ image metadata in response to ~~a user response to the prompting of the user~~ the user identification, the metadata identifying the image as containing the image attribute that the user identified.

7. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~6~~ 1, ~~wherein the user response to the prompting comprises direct user selection of at least one presented image~~ further comprising prompting the user to identify select images of the images presented to the user that each contains a particular image attribute so as to increase the proficiency with which images are retrieved for the user.

8. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~6~~ 7, ~~wherein the user response to the prompting comprises user identification of at least one image attribute in at least one presented image~~ further comprising storing image metadata in response to the user identification, the metadata identifying the select images as each containing the particular image attribute.

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ analyzing images for a recognizable image attribute during an image storing process.

10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising ~~the step of~~ storing ~~attribute associations as~~ image metadata ~~based upon the analyzing of the images~~ in response to the analyzing, the metadata identifying an analyzed image as containing the recognizable image attribute.

11. (Currently amended) An image retrieval system, comprising:

means for querying a user as to attributes of an image the user wishes to retrieve by posing a series of explicit questions to the user;

means for receiving explicit user responses to the questions; and

means for presenting images to the user based upon the user responses.

12. (Currently amended) The system of claim 11, further comprising means for ~~prompting~~ enabling the user to explicitly identify image attributes of the presented images.

13. (Currently amended) The system of claim 12, further comprising means for storing an ~~attribute association as~~ image metadata in response to ~~a~~ user ~~response to the prompting of the user~~ identification of image attributes, the metadata identifying image as containing the image attributes that the user identified.

14. (Currently amended) The system of claim 11, further comprising means for analyzing images for a recognizable image attribute during an image storing process.

15. (Currently amended) The system of claim 14, further comprising means for storing ~~attribute associations as~~ image metadata ~~based upon~~ in response to the analyzing of the images, the metadata identifying an analyzed image as containing the recognizable image attribute.

16. (Currently amended) A computer program stored on a computer-readable medium, comprising:

logic configured to generate and present explicit questions for a user that are designed to elicit responses as to attributes of an image the user wishes to retrieve;

logic configured to receive explicit user responses; and

logic configured to determine which images may satisfy the user's retrieval wishes.

17. (Currently amended) The program of claim 16, further comprising logic configured to ~~prompt~~ enable the user to explicitly identify image attributes of the presented images.

18. (Currently amended) The program of claim 17, further comprising logic configured to store ~~an attribute association as~~ image metadata in response to ~~a~~ the user ~~response to the prompting of the user~~ identification, the metadata identifying the image as containing the image attribute that the user identified.

19. (Currently amended) The program of claim 16, further comprising logic configured to analyze images for a recognizable image attribute during an image storing process.

20. (Currently amended) The program of claim 19, further comprising logic configured to store ~~attribute associations as~~ image metadata ~~based upon the~~ in response to the analyzing of the images, the metadata identifying an analyzed image as containing the recognizable image attribute.

21. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising prompting the user for keywords or phrases during an image storing process, the keywords or phrases being relevant to content of an image.

22. (New) The method of claim 21, further comprising storing keywords as metadata in response to receiving keywords or phrases provided by the user, the metadata identifying the image as containing content described by the keywords or phrases.

23. (New) The method of claim 5, wherein explicitly identifying at least one image attribute comprises explicitly selecting a portion of an image presented to the user.

24. (New) The system of claim 11, further comprising means for prompting the user for keywords or phrases during an image storing process, the keywords or phrases being relevant to content of an image.

25. (New) The system of claim 24, further comprising means for storing keywords as metadata in response to receiving keywords or phrases provided by the user, the metadata identifying the image as containing content described by the keywords or phrases.

26. (New) The program of claim 16, further comprising logic configured to prompt the user for keywords or phrases during an image storing process, the keywords or phrases being relevant to content of an image.

27. (New) The program of claim 26, further comprising logic configured to store keywords as metadata in response to keywords or phrases provided by the user, the metadata identifying the image as containing content described by the keywords or phrases.